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ABSTRACT

Most people in South Korea expressed deep sympathy for the innocent victims of the September 11th attacks, but, unlike their government's official position that supported U.S. military action, many were opposed to the war the United States began in Afghanistan. The president asked for emphasis on peace and anti-terrorism education. Since the role of education has been stressed in every moment of crisis in South Korean history, it was only natural to think about what education could do to focus the world on peace, to reduce social conflicts, and to seek a more secure life. This paper does not focus upon why terrorists commit such massacres in a political and historical context, but acknowledges that suicidal terror, the U.S. war against Afghanistan, and the ensuing tension in the Middle East create conflicts among different groups with contrasting interests. The paper reviews a number of overt and covert factors that could cause serious conflicts inside and outside Korea. It addresses social conflicts that South Koreans face when determining relationships with others such as foreign workers, North Korea, and Japan. The paper examines what educational role should be used in these contexts. It introduces educational efforts improving international and intercultural understanding and contributing to peace and coexistence, discusses the limits of existing programs for peace education, and looks for other possibilities. (Contains 12 notes and 27 references.) (BT)

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# The Meaning of Peace and the Role of Education in South Korea.

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# "The meaning of Peace and the role of education in South Korea"

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## 1. Introduction

With regard to the response of South Koreans to September 11th, most people expressed deep sympathy for those innocent victims, but unlike the government's official position confirming a strong will of support for the U.S. military action, many of them were opposed to the war the U.S would begin in Afganistan. There were some people who even thought that the terror was the anticipated result from unjust policies against the Middle East in the past age of Pax Americana. Also, South Korea's anxiety had increased as having long been known as one of "rogue states," North Korea kept a neutral position, not supporting the U.S.' "fight back", by declaring that they were opposing to terror as well as war against terror.

Overall, South Koreans took a realistic position by officially supporting the U.S.' attack against Taliban government and a humanitarian attitude by being sorry for the innocent victims of both the terror and the war. The president asked for emphasis on peace and anti-terrorism education. Given that a role of education have been stressed historically in every moment of nation's crisis, it would be natural to think about what education can do for the world with peace, less social conflicts, and more secured individual life.

In this paper, we do not focus upon why terrorists did such a horrible massacre in a political and historical context. However, we acknowledge that a series of the suicidal terror, the war of the U.S

against Afganistan, and the following tension in the Middle East is a mammoth conflict between different groups with contrasting interests, which reminds us to look back over a number of overt and covert factors that could cause serious conflicts inside and outside Korea.

From this view, we will go through, first, a few social conflicts that South Koreans are actually facing with when figuring out relationship with "others" such as foreign workers, North Korea, and Japan. Then, we will argue what educational role should be played in these contexts. Finally, we will introduce various educational efforts to improve international and intercultural understanding so as to contribute towards peace and co-existence, and also discuss the limits of existing programs for peace education, and try to look for other possibilities.

## 2. Conflicts

### 2.1. Migrant labors

According to a recent presentation of IOM (International Organization for Migration), South Korea has been rising as a major country in Asia in accepting migrant workers. In fact, according to an announcement of Korean Ministry of Justice, 200,600 of 499,000 foreigners who were actually staying in Korea on December 31, 2001, were illegal workers overstaying their visas permitting stay, which amounted the highest number Korea ever had. Compared to 148,300 in March 2001, the number of illegal workers had increased to 35%. There has been a rapid rise in the number of foreigners arriving here in pursuit of low-paying manual jobs since the industrial trainee system was introduced in 1991.

Among those workers migrating through the trainee system, some become illegal workers by running away from the designated workplace in the middle of this contract period mostly because they cannot stand the harsh working environment; some of them succeed in finding jobs paying

higher wages, but instead they have to live under permanent threats of being rounded up and banished anytime. They still cannot leave Korea until they have earned enough money to pay back the large amounts of debt they owed in their homelands to pay fees to recruitment brokers. In many cases, however, they find their salaries far insufficient to repay their debts.

Recently, an increasing number of migrant workers are asking for "humane treatment" at the workplace. A white paper published by the Joint Committee of Migrant Workers in Korea, a nationwide network of over 30 counseling and education facilities for foreign workers, offers vivid descriptions of atrocious infringement of their basic rights. The paper contains about 100 cases of overwork, unpaid wages, physical assault, verbal abuse and sexual harassment, among other hardships encountered by foreign workers in this country, regardless of whether they are documented or undocumented. Civil society and human rights activists have called for a reform of the Industrial Technical Trainee Program that provides small firms with a leeway to exploit and abuse foreign, mostly illegal, workers who have no legal means to protect themselves[1].

In response to the rising outcries from the foreign workers and the sympathetic civil society, the government worked out a bill to revise the concerned law with a view to implementing the changed system during the first half of this year. But the bill merely provides an expedient step of extending the period for formal employment to two years and cutting back training to one year, instead of adopting a new system to license the individual firms with a labor shortage to recruit workers themselves abroad[2].

What we see as more problematic here is that in the implementation of policy regarding foreign workers, there is very little concern about equality or human right. Very few Koreans realize that problems regarding migrant workers in Korea is not whether they are illegal or not, but a matter of

[1] *The Korea Herald*, Jan. 26, 2002
[2] *Ibid.*

*racial discrimination*. Many of them feel pitiful with the situation in what foreign workers are, but do not feel responsible for a sort of superiority they often have felt towards foreign workers who come from less developed countries. Koreans' pride of their homogeneous society throughout the history of over 5,000 years can be easily accommodated to distorted nationalism that pursues their own interests and selfishly excludes others. Here is the reason for a serious responsibility of education.

2.2. Two Koreas

In 2001, 583 people from North Korea entered South Korea.[3]. About 100 among them were teenagers, but only half of them go to school while the others get home schooling or vocational training[4]. The reasons are various, yet one thing common is that they have not had any opportunity for adjustment needed, which is not institutionalized, thus very few program for adjustment exist.

For those who go to public school, the situation is not less harsh than those who do not. Lack of "socialized" experience with South Koreans, they feel a fairly amount of cultural differences, which sometimes makes them alienated by their classmates who are not familiar with (respecting) *difference*. As for the adjustment problems that North Koreans have experienced in South Korea, we want to look at two important reasons in education: lack of multicultural education and persistent "Ban-Kong Kyoyuk"(anti-communism education).

The socio-cultural difference between North and South Korea is rather big, although it has been "only" about 50 years since the separation of Korea in the aftermath of the Korean War. During the Cold War, the antagonism of ideologies bore an extreme hostility, which has been reflected first and foremost in education as a form of school textbooks containing explicit anti-communism full of

[3] Hangyore, Jan. 03. 2002
[4] Hangyore, Jan. 06, 2001

hostility.

On the other hand, we have seen a number of changes in relation between the two Koreas for the past five years. The most dramatic example would be the last summit meeting in Pyong-yang. For the first time since the national division, President of South Korea visited North Korea, which was never even imagined before. This summit meeting seemed to create a mood for peace and conciliation by and large. In the meanwhile, anti-communism education has gone though certain regression since 1990's when a combination of economic globalism and neo-capitalism began to spread out in Korea as a new dominant ideology because to increase tension by publicizing anti-communism would never be an advantage for Korean economy. As a result, most part of exclusively hostile and critical contents against the North has disappeared in history, moral, and social education textbooks.

However, the reality is far less hopeful than what people are persuaded by the touching scene of the two summits' rendezvous, and anti-communism or rather an emotion against North Korea is still supported, but in more implicit ways. First, although the antagonism has disappeared in most of textbooks, we have military drill as a required subject in the formal school curriculum that elucidates, through its textbook, the antagonism towards North Korea. Second, we still have National Security Law by which North Korea is defined as an enemy, and enable to penalize people, for example, who speak in favor of the North Korea, or praise communism system or ideology. Finally, anti-communism slogans are easily found at public places such as in the subway: "Chase Leftists' Violence and Achieve Democracy and Security," "Perfect provision against the communist allows secured national development," "(North Korean) spy come in disorder, prosperity comes in order."[5]

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[5] Kwon, Hyuk-Beom, *Hankukeui Pangongjueui (Anti-communism in South Korea)*,

2.3. Close, but Far Relationship between Korea and Japan

The tendency for Korea to evaluate Japan more emotional than rational has required people to think ethnocentrically, and keeping the national self-respect has been considered as being equivalent to the benefit of a contemporary nation of Korea. For example, Japanese films have been imported and played in movie theaters in Seoul since 1999. It was the event to symbolize cultural cooperation between Korea and Japan. It had been a taboo to show any TV program or pop music through public media in the society of Korea except for animation. Besides, it is not merely a pleasure, but also the destiny of Korea to win over Japan in a soccer game. Many historians want to ascertain that ancestor's history of Korea might be superior to that of Japan. Japanese advanced economic development is often scorned in Korea and its cultural conservativeness is criticized as the narrow perspective of a nation of island. Therefore the attitude toward Japan and Japanese seems to be very friendly, but there might always be the tense relationship.

Most of all, Korea has continuously interfered Japan's current tendency to be more conservative and its trials to widen military forces. For instance, many politicians and historians who are taking in the helm of government affair in Japan would speak out that Korea had achieved political, economic, educational, and cultural modernization with the help of Japan during the period of being colonized and that what Japanese had done could be forgiven. They(Japan / Japanese government) have also insisted that Japanese don't have to be responsible for all issues such as "comfort women," "experiment on a living human body by Japanese military," "exploitation of resources and labors," "destruction of cultural heritages," "a large-scale massacre," and so forth, which were committed as war crimes during the World War II. Furthermore, the recent controversial textbook of history in Japan is challenged by many countries which had experienced the (Japanese) colonization during the World War II (Robert, 2001), for it is to blame for intentional missing, avoiding, or distorting the

historical issues on what Japanese had done during the World War II.

While facing with such an "arrogant" attitude of some Japanese, most of Koreans could not but make the same voice. The critics against Japan's nationalism on history are much stronger in the sphere of civil society than in government in Korea, which has very complicated relationship with Japan with regard to economy and politics. For some radical nationalists who would like to clear off the vestiges of the past colonization, Japan may still remain an antagonistic national opponent.

The experience of colonization for 36 years by Japan results in Koreans' negative emotional attitude toward Japanese culture, even though most of younger generations are experiencing Japanese culture in their everyday lives. The emotional deep gap of two countries is to blame more for Japanese biased interpretation on history near Japan, however, we should remember that it (the gap/ emotional conflict between Korean and Japan) still remains tense because both of countries have not tried enough to resolve it, but to persist one's own standpoint.

3. What is the Role of Education in the Current Context of Korea?

The most important role of education is to make Korean people understand what's going on nowadays (Kaisa, 1999). The situation with the antagonistic relation enforces people assign compulsorily the torture that would come from. In the society, the political and military authority usually works very powerfully. Besides with the political and military power, they used to control the democratic and free communication among people (Gramsci, 1971; Althursser, 1971). Thus, I can say that it would be the democratic society to reveal the actual conflict around the society and to try to resolve it positively.

In the past history of Korea, it was so hard to find the term of democracy when South Korea would insist on denying the existence of North Korea. The tense competition between two Koreas

has prohibited intellectuals from expressing their free thoughts toward a democratic society in each region. So far a large number of prisoners of conscience in South Korea and many current refugees from North Korea to the other countries, especially to South Korea, are the certain examples to show what and how each government has done up till now.

The problematic relation with Japan is as same as that between two Koreas. For Koreans, the Korean experience to be colonized by Japan would remind of negative memory all the time and keep most of Korean people from the cooperation with Japan in terms of academic, cultural, political relationship. Koreans tend to deal with Japan through nationalistic ideology, which would be the substitution of cultural and economic inferiority. The emotional far distance between Korea and Japan, even though Japan have had the nation-oriented conservative attitude to interpret and educate the history, both of them have never yield what each wants to keep in terms of economic, cultural, and national benefits.

The discrimination and attacking human rights of migrant workers' was the result from the people's ignorance for the economic development. So far many people would deny the fact that the discrimination exists in the society of Korea and he/she would be one of the international racists.

This is the point where education can play an important role. The value of international understanding and peace contained in the revised 7th curriculum, the transformation of educational discourse of unification education, and social movements for protecting human rights by NGOs are the endeavors to reveal the problematic conflict and to look for the active alternatives (MOE, 1998a; Chung, 2000). So in the following chapter, we will describe three practical efforts as the educational role to resolve the conflict in Korea: the Revised 7th Curriculum Reform and Education for International Understanding and Peace Education (EIU), the New Approach for Unification Education, and Non-Governmental Organizations and their Educational Struggles for Protection of

Human Rights.

4. Educational Efforts toward a Peaceful Society of Korea

4.1. "The Revised 7th Curriculum Reform" and Education for International Understanding and Peace Education (EIU) in Korea

From 1960, the Korea National Commission of UNESCO (KNCU) has played an important role to disseminate the value of peace. While living in, so called, "global village," it becomes common to hear international conflicts through mass media. "An intensification of conflicts among different geographical, ethnic and religious groups" or within the same region (KNCU, 1999a), "education for peace and co-existence has become the major task and priority of Education for International Understanding" and Peace Education (KNCU, 1999b).

The Revised 7th Curriculum Reform includes various subjects/programs such as democratic citizenship education, environmental education, education of information and its ethics, and education for international understanding, cooperation and peace (EIU) etc (MOE, 1998a). Among these subject/programs, each school is free to choose one or more subject/program on the basis of needs of teachers and students within regulation of the Curriculum. This new policy can be interpreted in two ways for EIU. The first one is that EIU can be taught at all school level as an independent subject/program. The second is that the spirit of EIU can be carried out through other free choice subjects/programs such as democratic citizenship education, environmental education, education of information, and others which are much more flexible in terms of operation than regular subjects (MOE, 1998a: 1-5).

And the Revised 7th Curriculum Reform also suggests establishment of international education

high school. This type of school aims at giving basic knowledge and sound attitude to students as a global citizen and possible specialists on international affairs in the future. The curricular of the international high school are composed of the following subjects (MOE, 1998a: 83-84).

◊ international understanding through one or two foreign languages of varied choices such as English, French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Arabs, and so forth.

◊ international politics, international economics, world problems, comparative culture, information science, area study, futurology, Korean traditional culture, and Korean modern society. Among these subjects, the subject of world problems deals with world peace, human rights, environmental issues, and development problems (Chung, 2000).

A more specified policies are found in "the Five Year Education Development Plan" by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 1998b; 1999). The contents of the plan are divided into eight areas Under one of these areas, titled "Cyber Space and Global Village as Learning Places in the age of Informationization and Globalization" one section is allocated for "Promotion of Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace"(Chung, 2000).

### 4.2. The New Approach for Unification Education

As the result of South-North Korean Summit meeting, Korean society has changed its atmosphere from tension and conflict toward reconciliation and cooperation in dealing with the issues about two Koreas. It was the most exciting moment that the two Koreas leaders shook hands at Pyongyang's Sun-An Airport June 13, 2000 after the Korean War. The historic meeting not only helped to bring rapprochement to the two Koreas, but also contributed to promoting peace in the Northeast Asian region (Chung, 2000: 1-2).

However, current school textbooks, which emphasize only South Korea's superiority over the

North, provide a far from accurate reflection of the current reconciliatory mood on the Korean peninsula (Chang, 2000). At the height of the Cold War, many South Korean students were taught that the North Koreans were a shifty, aggressive people and were warned to keep an eye out for spies lurking in their midst. Cartoons frequently depicted the North Koreans as wolves and monsters.

The value of unification has always been a part of the Korean curriculum. When the Republic of Korea was formed in 1948, the government implemented a fiercely anti-communist educational program to garner support for unification. This led many students to believe that national unity could only occur when Pyongyang's communist government was toppled. However, since the late 1990s, unification education has been further revised, with an emphasis on pragmatism. 70 model-schools have experimented with new methods implemented an open and cooperative program through which students could have opportunity to express opinions on unification issues and to explore ways to solve problems arising both before and after unification. For example, they held a Unification Play Festival and ran broadcasts demonstrating the North Korean lifestyle (Chang, 2000).

As mentioned above, unification education has been transformed "Ban-Kong Kyoyuk" (education for "anticommunist") into "Tong-Il Kyoyuk" (education for "unification") in terms of contents as well as modification of terminology regarding the texts (Wui, 1999). While the former (Anti-communism education) focuses on implementing antagonism and wariness, the latter (unification education), on the contrary, emphasizes the unity the cooperation of the two Korea. With regards to the methods of unification education, today's Tong-Il Kyoyuk focuses on encouraging students to be conscious of the importance of unity and to consider the need of unification through providing various learning materials and sharing open-minded educating, though Ban-Kong Kyoyuk had tried to infuse the emotional hostility into student's mind through one-sided teaching and delivering lectures. For unification education, new methods applied in classroom include are

simulation learning, NIE (newspaper in education), writing letters to North Korean friends and comparative study of the cultures of the two Koreas (KNCU, 2000)

4.3. Non-Governmental Organizations and their Educational Struggles for Protection of Human Rights

In the former description, it is estimated that more than 250,000 workers from foreign countries are employed in Korea at "3D" companies where Koreans are reluctant to work. Though they are doing needed work in the service of Korea, nevertheless they are treated as "strange aliens." The cold treatment is aggravated by the discriminatory attitude toward persons whose skin is a darker color or who come from poorer countries. They suffer from severe violations of their human rights. It is unacceptable for Koreans, who are known for our kindness and generosity, to discriminate against and mistreat foreign workers merely because they look different and speak different languages (Chung, 2000: 1-2).

It is so strange that many people in Korea cannot recognize the issue of foreign workers as a kind of discrimination. In the retrospect of history, many Korean have worked in other countries like many foreign workers in Korea even until now. In the dimension of government, there are a few policies toward Koreans who live in other countries. As the security policy for Koreans abroad is considered seriously by government, but migrant labors, immigrants, and persons with racial mixture are left without any action. All that migrant labors can take from the government is only a guide book about safety while working at a certain workplace (Kim, 2001).

At this point, citizens and civil organizations rather than the government have played important roles in terms of revealing ongoing mistreatment and exploitation to them and protecting their human rights. It has been well-known that Korea has had many demonstrations against undemocratic

government during last two decade. The dictatorship and militarism in governance were the main issues to bring out huge resistant demonstrations. There have been frequent demonstrations and the movements. But there are many changes in terms of the subject of the movement, the object against, and the way to demonstrate (Han, 2002). That is to say, the aspects of conflicts in the society of Korea have been various. The social movement by Non-Governmental Organizations, which has been called internationally "new social movement," has tried to represent the common people's human rights.

They have opened many classes for foreign workers like "Korean Language," "The Law of Labor in Korea," "The Understanding of Korean Culture." First, Korea National Commission of UNESCO has held a couple of programs for migrant labors to learn Korean language. For them, to learn Korean language is as important as to make money. The exploitation is due to the language problem. In a certain case, a labor who is not good at Korean cannot recognize a certain unjust terms in a written contract by a employer. In general, even though it is hard to say how many institutions would be charge in language programs, there are many institutions which have run educational activities: "Joint Committee for Migrant Workers in Korea,"[6] "Ansan Migrant Shelter,"[7] "Migrant Worker's House,"[8] "Asan Migrant Worker's Center,"[9] "Migrant 114,"[10] "Jubilee Mission Fellowship,"[11] and many other NGOs and progressive churches.

Interesting to say, most of language programs tend to contain another labor education like "the law of Labor in Korea," "resistance against an unjust treatment by employers," "the international human rights," "labor union in Korea," and so forth. Many social actors who are engaged in these

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[6] Visit the following site, http://jcmk.jinbo.net/
[7] Visit the following site,http://www.migrant.or.kr/
[8] Visit the following site, http://www.migrantworkers.org/
[9] Visit the following site, http://asm.nodong.net/
[10] Visit the following site, http://www.migrant114.org/
[11] Visit the following site, http://www.jubileekorea.org/

critical social activities are raising a certain issues with regards to human rights of migrants and minorities in the society in Korea. They act immediately to stop the cruel and deadly mistreatment, and to guarantee their equal status as workers and as human beings. Under many migrant shelters, social actors have taught the human rights and unjust social problems both to the migrants and the Korean people. As for migrant labors, they come to realize the reality around themselves and to speak their rights out in public.[12]

Second, "the Understanding of Korean Culture and History" is another educational program for migrant labors in KNCU, YMCA in Korea, and other institutions. For example, "Korea Industrial Complex Corporation (KICC)" has opened "Mun-Hwa Deaha" (means "the college of culture in Korea") in a regional center under KICC since 2001 for migrant labors in Korea. It aims at educating them the history of Korea and the cultural climate of workplaces in Korea and strengthening the adaptation of themselves to the workplaces in Korea (Lee, 2001). It can be evaluated as a developed step toward the migrant labors in Korea in terms of educational activities by official institution. But NGOs still continue to educate migrant workers with social, cultural, and historical contexts of Korea.

Most of all, it is important to understand that the network among both domestic and international NGOs, especially related to the human rights, is well organized and works effectively. Each organization has played an important role in terms of educating citizenship, maintaining social welfare, economy interruption, sharing information, guarding citizen's rights, watching tax reform and process of legislation. These fields are not at all unfamiliar with common people, even though all of them are closely related to their everyday lives.

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[12] " How are you to be paid?" by Equity, Trade, Union , Nov.19, 2001, also visit the following site. http://migrant.nodong.net/migrant/board.cgi?id=english&page=1&action=view&number=8.cgi&img=no

In terms of their educational roles for protecting human rights, open-minded sharing information and effective using new media are the general approaches to keep the conversation with common people. Specialties in charge of each field try to understand what is wrong, to interpret it into common word, and to make reasonable alternatives. In the civil society, NGO's important educational role is to encourage people to participate in the action and demonstration against the attempts to attack human rights. In this process, various media play a crucial part to widen information, to rally people who are interested in the issue, and to gather more creative idea for advanced alternatives.

## 5. Conclusion

We described the three educational activities in terms of resolving the conflicts in the Korean Peninsular. One was to disseminate the value of peace through Education for International Understanding and Peace Education with the revised 7th national curriculum. Another is to explain the change of unification education for peaceful unification of two Koreas in terms of content and method. The last is NGO's struggles to reveal the limitation of the society of Korea and to right it in terms of keeping human rights.

All the aforementioned educational efforts are to understand what kind of problems have existed in the society of Korea, to examine how to correct it in the current context of Korea, and to show the actual activities to try to come true alternatives for more equal and democratic society. It is absolute fault to recognize these activities as the whole endeavors in Korea. They are just a few results from our consideration: hope for resolution conflicts in Korea and actual activities to express in the educational struggle at the context.

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